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THE HONOURABLE JIM BRADLEY
ONTARIO MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

NOTES FOR REMARKS TO

CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE

MARCH 28, 1988
(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today.

The companies you represent include major industries in this province and in Canada. Nearly all of you are being affected, in one way or another, by the environmental restoration currently underway in Ontario.

As Minister of the Environment, I have launched a fundamental reform of legislation, policies and programs which our government believes is essential to the long term environmental and economic security of the province and its people.

As the executives chiefly responsible for environmental affairs in your companies, you play an important role in the cleanup the people of this province are demanding.

The corporate decisions that you affect will have a significant impact both on the environment and on the long-term economic future of your companies.

The Municipal Industrial Strategy for Abatement -- MISA -- is the keystone of our reforms, and is intended to clean up Ontario's waterways by stopping water pollution at its source. MISA's ultimate objective is nothing less than the virtual elimination of persistent toxic contaminant discharges to our waterways.

While MISA itself is a practical, staged approach to cleaning up, its premise is a fundamental departure from our society's past industrial practices. In the past, industrialization was subsidized by the public in the form of cheap waste disposal in the environment -- pollution. The first environmental controls were brought in to address this policy's most offensive excesses: public health concerns, unbearable nuisances and gross environmental degradation.

The onus however, was on the public, and therefore government, to prove why -- and to what level -- pollution needed to be abated. Pollution was innocent until proven harmful.

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Just as polite society once accepted spitting in public -- indeed accepted it indoors -- so society once accepted pollution. That is no longer the case. Our government is removing the spittoons from Ontario's environmental living room.

It is no longer acceptable for an industrial enterprise to reduce its waste disposal costs by polluting air, soil or water. Polluters do not own the environment -- we all do. And polluters must stop using everyone's environment as their private toxic garbage dump. The real owners -- the people of Ontario -- are, quite simply, withdrawing their permission for industries to use it for that purpose.

That is what MISA is all about -- the withdrawal, ladies and gentlemen, of industry's permit to pollute. Our government, through MISA, is saying to you: we will give you time, we will give you staged requirements, but you must first reduce, and ultimately cease, to pollute the environment. It will profit you to keep this fundamental change in mind as your companies decide on the best way to comply with the first round of MISA requirements.

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The government and the people of Ontario are committed to this basic environmental reform. It is a disturbing situation when my ministry must report, as it did last October, that 101 out of 154 industrial dischargers failed to meet discharge requirements. Furthermore, this report reflected no significant improvement over the previous year's performance.

This lack of progress is an indictment of the environmental status quo, and clear evidence of the need for the new approach to environmental protection that MISA represents.

I appreciate industry's participation in MISA pre-monitoring programs and in the Joint Technical Committees which do a lot of the hard-slogging in the regulation-writing process.

We expect the MISA monitoring regulations to provide detailed and complete data on all of the toxic and conventional contaminants discharged into our waterways. These regulations will also incorporate an audit process to ensure this data is complete and accurate.

That monitoring will give us -- for the first time -- the total picture for all identified contaminants of concern.

In the next major stage of MISA, development of the abatement regulations, we will set legally enforceable discharge standards, to take over from the voluntary guidelines of the past.

These standards will be strictly enforced, and the new penalty structure established 15 months ago by our government will provide strong incentives to comply.

The entire MISA program is geared to results. It will set enforceable standards on the basis of the results that can be attained by the best available technology which is economically achievable.

MISA is not a one-shot effort. As new technology develops which permits greater abatement of a toxic discharge -- or better yet, reduction or elimination of toxic wastes from the process -- allowable limits will be reviewed and lowered.

We want to leave ample latitude for innovation and enterprise, so MISA will simply set discharge standards. We have no intention of dictating the machine or process by which you reach the required standard of effluent quality. That is your decision, and one that you are best qualified to make.

We will review each sector periodically, amending regulations to move closer to virtual elimination. With this in mind, prudent planners may wish to make the effort and investment now to deal decisively with their company's pollution problems early in the MISA process.

I urge you to consider approaches which will help your company leap past the initial discharge standards and closer to the ultimate elimination of pollution.

Look to the 4Rs -- reduction of waste, reuse, recycling and reclamation.

Our pulp and paper producers, for example, have the option of adopting bleaching methods which drastically reduce the use of chlorine, and which, therefore, minimize the unwanted presence of dioxin and other chlorinated organic by-products in effluents and products. Under this option, toxic waste is not reduced by add-on pollution controls, it is never produced in the first place.

Early investment in these directions can pay big dividends for Ontario companies.

With the complete process review that MISA involves, you have an opportunity to assess your entire operation in the light of new and emerging production technology. You can identify the materials and processes which lend themselves to internal recycling and reuse, or to closed-loop operations. You can evaluate the potential of operational changes which will turn waste materials into marketable commodities.

Research and development in these areas may take you to the MISA objectives with a minimum of add-on pollution controls and the wastes which they accumulate, and which must be disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

The company which is first with an innovative and cost-effective waste reduction or treatment process which meets, not just the first-level standards set by MISA, but the standards which will be set in the second or third round, has a competitive edge.

All your competitors, here and abroad, comprise a potential market for selling the process, recovering development costs and profiting from those who are slow off the mark.

Opportunity goes hand-in-hand with the challenge of MISA.

The current healthy state of our economy provides a strong base for advances in environmental protection. Those companies which drag their heels hoping that government and public resolve falters, risk falling far behind their bolder competitors.

While the major industrial operations which discharge directly to watercourses are the most visible polluters, a far greater number of operations whose effluent goes to municipal sewer systems are getting equally close attention in MISA.

Control in this area is important. These indirect dischargers are responsible for much of the toxic organic compounds and metals we find in places such as Toronto harbor. These materials pass through sewage treatment plants untouched, or only partially treated, to pollute the water. Those persistent toxics that are trapped by sewage treatment, wind up in the sludge.

This may mean toxic air pollution where sludge is incinerated. In other areas, where municipalities hope to put their sludge to productive use on farm fields, contamination rules this out.

Some industrial pollutants do not even make it to the treatment plant. Volatile compounds escape from the sewer system to urban air.

Yet another problem is that toxic industrial wastes may interfere with the operation of the sewage treatment plants, rendering treatment of domestic wastes less effective.

Furthermore, industrial discharges to the sewer system raise occupational health concerns for municipal sewage plant workers.

We know that there are as many as 30 thousand industrial and commercial operations which discharge wastes to sewers, and about 5,000 of these could be considered significant sources. We have surveyed the industrial world for methods of dealing with this problem. Our consultant has recommended sector-by-sector pre-treatment regulations similar to those being formulated for direct dischargers.

In the next few weeks, I expect to release a discussion paper for public review and comment which lays out our proposed course of action for indirect dischargers. I invite you to participate in this process.

It will take a lot of talent and expertise to meet the challenge of MISA and other environmental initiatives. You, the members of this association, are a valuable resource in accomplishing the dramatic environmental reforms Ontarians are demanding.

Ontario's academic community and environmental consulting industry are also proven achievers.

The world market for environmental know-how is growing steadily and likely to accelerate as some of the basic concerns raised by the World Commission on Environment and Development take root in government policy around the globe.

The prospects are virtually unlimited for the Ontario industries and individuals who are prepared to be first with the best in pollution avoidance and control know-how.

I am confident that Ontario industry has the will and the skill to meet our environmental objectives at home, and to profit on the world market from their innovation.

Thank you.